DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 104 RC 020 626

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TITLE	Reopening of Kenton School, Elkview, West Virginia.
PUB DATE	2 Jan 96
NOTE	7p.; Presentation to Kanawha County, West Virginia, Board of Education.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Achievement Tests; *Board of Education Policy; *Consolidated Schools; *Educational Quality; Elementary Education; *Elementary Schools; Public Opinion; *Rural Schools; School Closing; School Community Relationship; Scores; *Test Score Decline
IDENTIFIERS	Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills; *Kanawha County Schools WV

ABSTRACT

In this presentation to the Kanawha County Board of Education (West Virginia), a community member argues in favor of the reopening of Kenton Elementary School (Elkview, WV). Despite community protest, in 1991 the Kanawha County Board of Education voted to consolidate Kenton and three other elementary schools in rural Elkview. This presentation suggests that consolidation has lowered the educational quality that students receive, as evidenced by lower test scores. The consolidated school's scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) dropped in its first year of operation, when compared to the mean scores of the four elementary schools from the previous year, and have continued at a lower level to the present. In addition, data indicate that the consolidated school spent 3,376 instructional dollars per student, compared with a county average of $3,130 and an average of $2,827 for the four schools in their last year of operation. A literature search of the ERIC database indicates that there is no conclusive evidence that consolidation without public support enhances either test scores or economic efficiency. It is suggested that the reopening of Kenton Elementary School would not only promote a sense of community, but also increase public support for public education and improve the academic performance of students. In addition, the proposal would eliminate busing problems, would require little capital cost, and could actually save the school system money. Includes a comparison of CTBS test scores of the consolidated school with the four schools that were closed. (LP)

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ED 399 104

PRESENTATION OF DR. JIM PIERCY TO THE KANAWHA COUNTY (WV) BOARD OF EDUCATION REGARDING THE REOPENING OF KENTON SCHOOL ELKVIEW, WEST VIRGINIA

JANUARY 2, 1996

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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RC 020626

Jan 2. 1996

PRESENTATION TO THE KANAWHA CO. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Marple, and Board Members:

I appreciate again the opportunity to represent the wishes and interests of many persons in the Elkview area for a return of a school to our community. You will recall this process started in September of 1991 when an announcement was made, with no warning, about a hearing to close Elkview, Big Chimney, Frame and Kenton schools. On Dec. 12 of that year, the final closure hearing was held in the Cultural Center before an overflow and very angry crowd and things have not been the same since. I don't think I need to tell you that there is still a significant element of suspicion and distrust of the Kanawha Co. Board of Education in our community today. The vote for the most recent bond issue in our community is an eloquent demonstration of that fact.

Do we need to return an elementary school to the Elkview community? **YOU BET WE DO!** Let me tell you why:

1. We are not coming close to educating our children for competition in today's world. Let me illustrate by quoting you some test scores from our local elementary center. In the first year of the center's operation, the test scores dropped precipitously from the mean percentile of the four consolidated schools in their last year of operation. For example total language was 54 before consolidation--45 after consolidation. Total math was 55 before

consolidation--34 after consolidation. Total reading was 57 before consolidation--50 after consolidation, and total basic skills was 55 before consolidation--43 after. Based on the latest information that I have, which is 94-95, those scores have continued to decline--not to improve as expected and promised. In fact, Elk Center is ranked 51 of 61 elementary schools in the county in basic skills 3rd grade CBTS scores with a 38th percentile. This school has not been above the 50th percentile in **ANY** tested areas that I have data for. Of course this poor performance is carried forward to the middle school and Herbert Hoover High School where the basic skills testing has been below the 50th percentile for three of the previous four years.

It should also be noted that Elk Elementary spends, according to the latest figures, $3376(instructional dollars per student) compared with a county average of $3130 and compared to a average of $2827.75 for the four schools in their last year of operation.

I hold in my hand a search of the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) data base which was done Dec. 29 of 1995. I'll be glad to provide you with copies if you wish. This search again demonstrates that there is no conclusive evidence that consolidation without public support either 1: enhances test scores or 2: is more economical. In fact just the opposite is true. The literature is replete with examples of consolidation against community wishes and the resultant deteoration of academic performance and public support for schools. As Moses said to Pharoah, how long and how many plagues must we endure before you act? Our kids deserve better.

I have told you the first reason why I think a school should be returned to the Elkview area. Let me give you some more.

2. Reopening Kenton is a proposal whose time has come. In September 1992, you were given a proposal for reopening Kenton as an early childhood development center. This proposal has been studied, restudied, and we on Elk River have been led to believe this was about to happen for the last two years. The Blue Ribbon process has endorsed this proposal with minor modification and you again tonight have a chance to review this proposal. I submit it is now time to act on one of the four options the Blue Ribbon process has proposed to you. We have endured three and one-half years of unsatisfactory academic performance in our elementary center which has rippled into Herbert Hoover High School. We must do something **NOW**.

3. This action would return an elementary school to the community where very young children can be nurtured and actively encouraged to learn in familiar surroundings, parents can be more active in school activities and return a sense of community to the Elkview Area. It is interesting that in my ERIC search, one of the factors that continues to arise where schools are consolidated without local support is the loss of community cohesiveness. One study done in Tennessee documents the loss of sense of community, decline in public support for public education and decreased satisfaction with public education in areas where consolidation occured without local support. The article is titled QUESTIONING CONSOLIDATION by Mr. Ed Young and it appears in the Spring 94 edition of the Tennessee School Boards Journal.

4. The reopening of Kenton would relieve some busing problems that have been a concern in our community. In fact I find it very strange that busing was a major factor in the recent state Board of Education edict to Lincoln Co. to reconsider their consolidation plan and it was summarly dismissed when consolidation was imposed in Elkview.
5. The proposal utilizes a perfectly sound building and will perhaps facilitate closing of some older and unsafe buildings in the system.
6. This proposal requires little capital cost to implement and could indeed save money. For example,I would suggest that the sewer modifications now underway at Bridge would be unnecessary if one of the recommended options were approved for implementation.
7. It restores a community playground to the Elkview area.

In summary, enactment of this proposal will correct some of the ills that have seriously affected our children for almost four years. It is a proposal that cries out for implementation. It represents a major step in the implementation of the Blue Ribbon plan. We on Elk River cannot endure another year of mediocrity in our school system and lose yet another year of children to what we are doing now.

Thank You

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ATTACHMENT 1

Comparision of 3rd grade CTBS scores in the Elk Area

SCHOOL	TOT. LANG.	TOT. MATH	TOT. READING.	TOT BAS. SKILLS
91-92				
Big Chim.	49	41	50	46
Elkview	62	72	68	69
Frame	45	48	47	46
Kenton	58	61	64	61
wgt. avg for all sch.	54	55	57	55
92-93				
Elk Ctr	45	34	50	43
93-94				
Elk Ctr	46	43	47	45
94-95				
Elk Ctr.	40	40	35	38
Average Kan Co.	59	64	59	61
Average State W.Va.	62	71	62	66

Comparison of 6th Grade CBTS scores-- Elkview consolidated schools

before Consolidation				
91-92 wgt. avg. all sch.	65	63	58	63
after consolidation				
92-93 Elk Middle	51	52	46	50
93-94 Elk Middle	55	58	54	56
94-95 Elk Middle	50	58	48	52
94-95 County	56	62	53	58
94-95 State	59	62	56	59

In 3rd grade basic skills for 94-95, Elk Center is ranked 51 of 61 schools in Kanawha Co. and the score of the 38th percentile compares with a county average of 61 and a state average of 66.

Dollars/student spent at Elk Center for 93-94	$3376
Dollars/student spent--avg in Kanawha Co.	$3130